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MEMORIAL

OF THE

Professors in the Medical Department

OF THE

Columbian College,

IN THE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

FEBRUARY 13, 1826.

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1826.

MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled.

The memorial of the Professors in the Medical Department of the
Columbian College, in the District of Columbia,

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

That, in the year 1821, a charter was granted by the Congress of the United States, establishing the Columbian College, authorizing a Board of Trustees to appoint a President, Professors, and Tutors, to give instruction, and also to confer degrees, in the liberal arts and sciences.

By virtue of the authority of this charter, an authority similar to that from which the medical schools in the different States derive their existence, with, perhaps, a single exception, the trustees, in their first circular, published in 1821, announced their intention to establish a Medical Department, and appointed two professors. This department gradually progressed to its organization in September, 1824, when two additional professors were introduced, and a desire expressed that a course of lectures should be commenced as early as practicable, in the city of Washington.

The trustees conferred on the professors no other assistance than that essentially resulting from the creation of the school, the power of conferring degrees. In all other respects, their responsibilities were personal. At a great sacrifice of time and labor, the professors were enabled so far to mature the arrangements of the Medical Department, as to deliver a course of lectures in the Spring of 1825. To accomplish this, a building was rendered suitable at considerable expense. At the close of the first course, two other professors were appointed, and a second, or winter course, is now nearly completed, with a class of thirty pupils, under circumstances promising a happy result. The present state of the school, and the inadequacy of the building, have induced the professors, on their personal responsibility, to appropriate six thousand dollars to the erection of a large edifice, as soon as a proper site can be procured.

The Medical Department, is, at this time, fully organized, and in this organization, every demonstration of a most liberal spirit has been made by the trustees of the College. The principle was avowed and acted on, to fill the professorships from the medical faculty in the District. How far this selection has elicited adequate abilities, is respectfully submitted as a suitable, and, to your Memorialists, a desirable subject of inquiry.

So far as the school has advanced, its steps give encouragement to those incurring the responsibilities. It has met with satisfactory approbation from the medical profession; the community has received it with all the interest such an institution is calculated to excite; while it bids fair to eventuate in permanent utility. The circular of the Medical Department will exhibit the fact, that, by the highest requisitions recognised in any school in this country, the avenue to graduation and the interests of society are strictly guarded.

The above statement of the origin and present condition of the medical school in this District, your Memorialists consider as due to your honorable body, inasmuch as Congress has manifested every disposition to foster and protect the medical profession. That disposition was fully evinced, by the incorporation of a medical society in the year 1819, with powers to hold property yielding several thousand dollars annually; to constitute a Board of Medical Examiners; to grant licenses to practice physic; to repress ignorant and empirical pretenders. In the fulfilment of these duties, the society is efficiently engaged.

Referring your honorable body to these two institutions, the one for education in, the other for the regulation of, the practice of physic, both directly emanating from Congress, your Memorialists entirely submit the question of the expediency and necessity of creating other incorporations at this time. To estimate aright the *expediency*, reference is respectfully made to what has obtained in Philadelphia and New York, where two chartered institutions, in an early state of medical instruction, served but to destroy each other; while the *necessity* for more than one school in one city, is by all mainly allowed to arise from a number of pupils, not likely for many years to resort to this metropolis. Under present circumstances, your Memorialists would, with all due respect, suggest the inquiry, whether the existence of two medical schools in this city, might not tend to create a spirit of professional discord, and result in fatal embarrassments to both?

The consideration of this question, now agitates more than one of our State Legislatures, but especially that of Pennsylvania. There a memorial has been presented for the incorporation of a second medical school in the city of Philadelphia. By those applying for a charter, it is solicited on the ground that the number of pupils in the University is so great, as to render it impossible to do justice to their education. Taking this ground, the agents for the new school do not hesitate to admit, that, "in an early period of medical instruction, a division cannot be advantageous to medical education." That, in Philadelphia, under these circumstances, it proved so destructive as to force a union, is well known; and that the school, no longer fettered by premature rivalry, has attained to high utility and prosperity, is felt in every part of our country. Not less convincing is [the history of two rival institutions in the city of New York, whose feuds so crippled their operations, as to call forth the interposition of legislative authority to bring about the organization of a single institution. In Boston, these precedents determined the legislature of Massachusetts to refuse the incorporation of a second school in that city, but a few

years since. It may pointedly be inquired, what would be the effect on the flourishing school just established in Charleston, South Carolina, if a rival should be raised to distract the energies of professional exertion.

The case now under the consideration of your honorable body, is in close analogy to those referred to in the early history of Philadelphia and New York. Here, under the authority of a charter from Congress, is a medical school, barely emerging from an inceptive state: the population of Washington does not compare with that of the two cities at the era alluded to; at this time, we can recognize schools in most of the States. In this city, the medical professors have personally, unaided by the trustees, at their own risk, pledged themselves to give to their school that dignity and character which shall render it worthy of its origin in the Congress of the United States, and of its location.

No monopoly is here aimed at; nothing unworthy the high spirit of professional liberality. This memorial is based on acknowledged principles, the force of which is confidently and respectfully submitted to Congress.

Signed by order, and in behalf of the Professors in the Medical Department of the Columbian College.

THO. SEWALL, *Chairman.*

THOS. HENDERSON, *Dean.*

